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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Country and intercountry programmes and projects

FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Note by the Administrator

I. PREPARATORY PROCESS

1. The Central African Republic has been implementing a programme of structural adjustment since 1986. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has had the responsibility of organizing round-table conferences for the country and has been extensively involved in the ongoing dialogue between the Government and the donor community concerning the management of the economy and the national development process.

2. The mid-term review of 1990 and the most recent round-table conference, held in Geneva in April 1991, provided the basis for the programming exercise, placing it squarely within the Government's evolving policy process.

3. The objectives of the fourth country programme included institution-building, particularly in the area of planning, human resource development and an increase in the level of food production. The programme contained 38 projects distributed among five sectors.

4. The mid-term review indicated an uneven level of performance and a lack of overall impact of the programme. It suggested a greater degree of focus with fewer interventions, as well as a reallocation of resources in the fifth programme towards: the Social Dimensions of the Adjustment process; community development; increased involvement of women and unemployed youth in the development process; private sector development, and the environment.

5. The advisory note benefited from the analyses prepared for the 1991 round-table conference and follow-up and from contributions of various consultative missions carried out with the support of UNDP and other donors. The note was adopted by all concerned in May 1991 as the basis for the country programme.

6. The coordination of external resources is the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy, Planning, Statistics and International Cooperation, which was instrumental in the formulation of the fifth country programme. The Ministry collaborated with UNDP and the leadership of the various working groups, comprising representatives of sectoral ministries, to move the programming process forward.

7. Apart from their participation in the working groups, United Nations system agencies and bilateral donors contributed primarily through the round-table process and its follow-up.

8. Despite the fact that the Central African Republic was one of the first countries to initiate a national technical cooperation assessment and programmes (NaTCAP) exercise, this process has not been pursued in recent years, possibly due to a perception that other concerns facing the country were more pressing. However there are indications of a revival of interest, both within the Government and among its major aid partners, and the NaTCAP process should recommence in 1992. Any identification of further technical cooperation needs, if available by then, will provide an important element in the mid-term review of the country programme, which is scheduled for late 1993 of early 1994.

II. ANALYTICAL COMMENTARY ON THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

9. The fifth country programme of the Central African Republic hinges on three areas of concentration: an increase in productivity; social and human resource development; and the strengthening of national capacity in planning and economic management. These themes reflect national development priorities and strategies, as enunciated in the national plans and as agreed to at the round-table conference and follow-up sectoral consultations.

10. Sustainable development in the Central African Republic will be possible only if the economy moves from decline and stagnation to growth. This is best achieved by an increase in productivity in the rural sector. Such an increase depends on the use of improved techniques by farmers. Until a return to even modest growth is achieved, carefully chosen interventions in the areas of social and human resource development will provide a degree of protection to particularly vulnerable groups and will provide a foundation for more ambitious measures designed to meet the needs of the population, once the country's economic strength is restored. Finally, the best way to ensure that sustainable human development becomes a permanent feature of national development efforts is to formulate a long-term plan of the needs of the

country and to endow those responsible governmental institutions with the capacity to determine accurately social and natural resource requirements in the planning and economic management processes.

11. The basis for the use of a programme approach by the Government and its partners is thus well developed in the rural sector. UNDP will work with the Government to identify, in the course of 1992, the overall needs for technical cooperation in this sector. By the end of the year, in close consultation with the Government and its donor partners, UNDP will select specific elements for support within the four main programme areas - research, extension services, marketing and availability of credit.

12. Approximately 42 per cent of fifth country programme resources will be devoted to this area of concentration, which will contribute to the achievement of the Government's dual objective to promote sustainable development; an increase in both agricultural and agro-industrial production and environmental protection and preservation.

13. The realization of these objectives calls for a participatory approach in rural development methods, thereby reflecting both the reallocation of resources urged by the mid-term review and the priority accorded poverty eradication and grass-roots participation by the Governing Council in decision 90/34 of 23 June 1990. Interventions within this framework will seek to ensure the integration of women, who in some areas constitute 80 per cent of the agricultural labour force, and youth in the development process. A more rational management of the country's natural resources will be promoted.

14. In the area of social and human resources development, UNDP intervention during the fifth programme will respond to the recommendations of the mid-term review concerning the social aspects of the adjustment process. The deterioration in the economy (the human development index (HDI) for the Central African Republic fell from 142 to 144 from 1990 to 1991) and the consequent increase in social discontent has led to a modification of the Government's strategies so as to take greater account of the social dimension of the Structural Adjustment Programme.

15. The economic and social conditions over the last year have hindered development of a coherent long-term strategy in these sectors. Consequently, during the fifth programme, UNDP will lend support to projects contributing to the social dimensions of human development. Specifically, these projects aim to improve social and sanitary conditions; to stem the spread of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS); to expand access to safe drinking water; and to promote training and human resources development. Approximately 34 per cent of fifth country programme resources will be devoted to this area of concentration.

16. The poor performance of the economy is linked to the institutional weaknesses of the economic planning and management system. UNDP will work to strengthen national capacity as well as economic planning and management.

Cooperation in this third field of concentration will focus on strengthening the statistical system within the Ministries of Planning and Rural Development, reinforcement of aid coordination, planning system support and the formation of a long-term perspective plan for the country. Approximately 11 per cent of fifth country programme resources will be devoted to this area of concentration.

17. Less than 10 per cent of programme resources will be allocated outside the main areas of concentration. They will address two basic concerns: environmental protection and mobilization of resources via sectoral follow-up to the round-table process. The balance of 10 per cent will be maintained as a programme reserve.

III. MANAGEMENT OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

18. The application of a coherent programme approach relies on the existence of a national sectoral strategy and framework. This approach will be applied, to the extent possible, in the area of rural development.

19. In certain other sectors, where such national programmes do not yet exist in sufficient degree of detail, UNDP cooperation will, in addition to project interventions, support government efforts to define national strategies and programmes, within the framework of consultations, in the sectors of education, health and small and medium-scale enterprises and industries.

20. Given the view of both the Government and UNDP that programme quality is improved with a greater degree of concentration, the number of projects will be reduced.

21. Each year, the rural development programme will be examined, in conjunction with the Ministries of Planning and Rural Development as well as with other concerned donors, in order to assess progress achieved and to arrive at a consensus on the future direction and management of the programme. Wherever possible, tripartite reviews and project evaluations will be carried out on a cluster basis, examining at one time a group of projects which address the same or closely related issues.

22. Regular consultations will be undertaken with the entire team of United Nations specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and bilateral and multilateral donors to strengthen the external aid coordination process. The mid-term review is scheduled for late 1993 of early 1994 and will provide an appropriate occasion to consider whether evolving political and economic circumstances require any significant modification in programme content.

23. Within the framework of the structural adjustment process, there will be few opportunities for the Government to recruit qualified national personnel.

Consequently the prospects for the rapid application of national implementation are limited. Nonetheless, there will be continuing effort to maximize the use of national expertise and institutions, as well as NGOs, in the implementation of the fifth country programme.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

24. The fifth country programme for the Central African Republic reflects government priorities for the use of UNDP resources to support its development objectives. The programme's areas of concentration are based on lessons learned during the fourth programme and on the best analysis available of what the country needs in the way of technical cooperation. They are also consistent with the guidance provided by Governing Council decision 90/34. The Administrator recommends that the Governing Council approve the fifth country programme for the Central African Republic.